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Book Notices.

"*The Rhyme and Reason of Country Life.*"
G. P. PUTNAM & Co. 1855.

MISS COOPER has rendered a service to those who love the beauty of the external world, by collecting in one volume such a mass of poetic thought relating to Nature. It was a happy conceit, and is carried out by the aid of an extensive reading of poetry. It includes poems and some few prose selections from most, if not all, the European languages. The introduction is in itself a most valuable contribution to our literature. We extract from it a passage or two :

"Probably, there never was a people needing more than ourselves all the refreshments, all the solace to be derived from country life in its better forms. . . . We need repose of mind. We need the shade of the trees and the play of the healthful breezes to refresh our heated brows. We need the cup of water, pure from the spring, to cool our parched lips; we need the flowers to soothe without flattery; the birds to cheer without excitement. We need the view of the green turf to teach us the humility of the grave; and we need the view of the open heavens, to tell us where all human hopes should centre."

It is got up in excellent style, profusely illustrated, by Döpler (why not by some of our native artists)? Most of the illustrations are good, and deserve credit as advances in wood engraving in this country. Those opposite pp. 280, 350, and 366, gratified us very much; but there are some too bad to be admitted into their company, as, for instance, that opposite p. 290, conceived in the worst phase of the grotesque, and poor altogether. Still, these are slight drawbacks on the excellence of the whole.

"*The World of Art and Industry.*" G. P. PUTNAM & Co. 1854.

WE find it exceedingly difficult to give an adequate idea of this book. To call it simply an Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition, would be a partial view of it only, since there is a literary department as elaborate and valuable as the pictorial—nay! even much more so. There are some of the most thorough and instructive essays which have ever been published here, and which, if published alone, would have constituted a volume of sterling worth. The articles on Rice and its Culture, Folaceous Fibres of American Endogenous Plants, Ultramarine, Naval Architecture, Latitudes and Longitudes, Lithography, Glass, Engravings, and some others are of too great value to the world at large to be overshadowed by the illustrative portion of the book as they seem to be here. When men attune their minds to be pleased simply by the externals of Art, they are too likely to pass by the more solid and valuable exposition of its principles and harmonies, and we venture to say that the scientific essays included in this work would have attracted more attention even than its illustrations.

The article on the Fine Arts—Sculpture—we must except strongly from the commendations. It seems to have been written by some one who with a partial feeling for Art, had only a knowledge of it sufficient to tell whether a piece of Sculpture was like the Greek or not, and, if unlike the Greek, then bad. For instance, he says :

"In illustration of this theory, history shows Sculpture to have touched its prime in Greece, that all subsequent Sculpture is successful only in the degree that it represents ideas peculiar to the Greek civilization, and, therefore, susceptible of a Greek treatment. That, consequently, all modern Sculpture, by which we mean all since the Greek, is of no historical significance, and bears no intrinsic evidence that it was not executed two

thousand years ago, having no relation to a different spirit of life, and that when it has aimed to represent a different spirit, it has signally failed, thereby showing its inadequacy."

We must beg the readers of the book, and we hope they may be many, not to place much importance on such speculations entirely unfounded on knowledge of Art. With regard to the reasoning of the article, there is little fear of its misleading anybody, since its trains are not sufficiently clear to prove very effective. For ourselves, we must admit that the ideas contained are too subtly enwrapped to be available to our edification. There is too much talk of Phidias, and Michael Angelo, and Titian, about whom most folks know nothing, and too little of Nature, of which they all know something.

We do not consider that it is any exaggeration to say that this is the most valuable book to the country at large, ever published in America. The diligence and research of the Editors and their coadjutors has been worthily sustained by the enterprise of the publishers.

The exquisite photographs bound in with the volume, are a new but attractive feature; that of the charming little statue of a girl threading a needle, is a gem in the way of photographing equal to anything we have seen.

Humanity in the City. By Rev. E. H. Chapin.
DE WITT & DAVENPORT.

THE earnest thought of a radical thinker. There is something almost fascinating in the vigorous common sense of these discourses, in the manliness with which the author digs down to the sources of good and evil in the social organization of the city. It is a book which should be read by every man who has a part to bear in the doings of "Humanity in the City," and those outside of the city will profit no less for themselves by its teachings. Chapin is no closet-bred thinker, but one who has tried life and knows what is in it. Here is one of the chance-thrown truths which our age has need to consider well.

"For the intellect is the most neutral of all our qualities. Man is swayed by the animal propensities of his nature; he is swayed by the moral and religious elements of his nature; but the intellect by itself is not a motive power."

One of the roots of all reform lies in this truth, and if men will ponder it well, they may simplify and render more effective their systems of education. The book, published in an attractive form, is made still more attractive by an excellent portrait of the author.

Byrne's Pocket Companion for Machinists, Mechanics, and Engineers. DE WITT & DAVENPORT.

A VERY neat edition of a standard work, by the English Engineer, Byrne. It contains all the rules of statics and dynamics, with time-tables &c., &c. It is too well known to need much comment, but we wish that it could have been revised by some American Engineer, and conformed to American usages, from which it differs in some respects. For instance, in the table of nominal horse power of engines, the allowance made for increase in length of stroke is much less than is just for our engines. The English practice is to diminish the velocity as the length of stroke increases, so that an engine of five feet stroke will make only half as many revolutions per minute as the one of two and a half feet, while an American engine makes the stroke of five feet in the same time as one of two and a half, thus doubling the power, while the relation of the two in Byrne's tables is about as 20 to 25. For common use it would be better if there were more tables in place of the rules by which to construct them, which our mechanics have hardly time to do when they want them.

"*Flora Lindsay,*" "*Roughing it in the Bush,*" "*Life in the Clearings,*" by Mrs. Moodie; "*Progress and Prejudice,*" by Mrs. Gore. DE WITT & DAVENPORT.

THERE are two classes of novels, so called, and only two, however many modifications there may be of them, one being the result of actual feeling and experience, clothed for convenience sake in the form of fiction; the other, fiction for its own sake, wanderings in a land of dreams; it may be from a thirst for that ideal beauty found only in dreams, or it may be from a temperament too weak to drink the wine of the actual life. Mrs. Moodie's books are of the former class, and form, in the order in which we have named them, her autobiography—her youth, the settling in a new country, and the residence after the new things have become old. Doubtless, like her own life, they include the memoir and romance-book of travels, and moral instructor. They are full of incident and graphic rendering of character, and rich with the refinement and delicacy of womanly feeling, and at the same time show the vigorous painting-brush usually apparent only in the hands of a man. As light reading, these books are among the best of their class—they rank with "*A New Home—Who'll Follow?*" by Mrs. Kirkland, and make one love the good common sense of the practical woman who wrote them. Such books have an historical importance, and they will, no doubt, at some remote period of time, be sought for, and read with interest, as being pictures of the society and scenery of the nineteenth century. They are brought out in a very creditable manner.

"*Progress and Prejudice*" is of the other class, and is, what all Mrs. Gore's novels are, entertaining and pleasant reading for idle hours; one of the books which are generally liked without ever creating a furor.

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"Ruskin's Lectures on Architecture and Painting." Reprint of J. WILEY. 1854.

RUSKIN manifested in a new form, though only with a clearer development of the old ideas. We shall have something to say, at length, before long, on this book, and the other works of Ruskin, and shall at present only speak briefly of it. It embraces lectures on architecture, Turner, and Pre-Raphaelitism, with some exceedingly valuable illustrations. There is something very singular in the way in which Ruskin has given his idea to the world. Years ago he gave us books treating of the most abstruse principles of Art, and now he is coming back to the point from which he should have started its rudiments. His works impress us with a kind of intellectual feverishness—a desire to anticipate the results he desires, and a corresponding want of faith in himself. We give a single extract from this book :

"Now, first, let me give you a familiar illustration of the difference with respect to execution.

"Suppose you have to teach two children drawing; one thoroughly clever and active-minded, the other dull and slow; and you put before them Jullien's chalk studies of heads—*études à deux crayons*—and desire them to be copied. The dull child will slowly do your bidding—blacken his paper and rub it white again, and patiently and painfully, in the course of three or four years, attain to the performance of a chalk head, not much worse than his original, but still of less value than the paper it is drawn upon. But the clever child will not, or will only by force, consent to this discipline. He finds other means of pressing himself with his pencil, somehow or another; and presently you find his paper covered with sketches of his grandfather, and grandmother, and uncles, and cousins—sketches of the room, and the house, and the cat, and the dog, and the country outside, and everything in the world he can set his eyes on; and he gets on, and even his child's work has a value in it—a truth which makes it worth keeping; no one knows how precious, perhaps, that portrait of his grandfather may be, if any one has but the sense to keep it till the time when the old man can be seen no more up the lawn, nor by the wood. That child is working in the middle-age spirit—the other in the modern spirit."